



SAFETY --- Network

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Michigan safety belt use increases again – to 94 percent

It was another record-setting year for safety belt use in Michigan, as the state's use rate jumped to 94 percent according to a direct observation survey conducted by the Wayne State University Transportation Research Group.

The survey took place following the statewide *Buckle Up or Pay Up/Click It or Ticket* safety belt enforcement mobilization in May. This year's campaign introduced new TV ads, including a spot aimed at high school teens, as well as an additional week of enforcement in more rural areas of the state.

The official figure was derived

from trained observers who measure safety belt use from locations throughout the state. More specific and detailed survey information will be available in six to eight weeks.

Safety belt use first climbed above 90 percent in 2003, reaching 90.5 percent. Last year, belt use jumped again, that time to 92.9 percent.

Michigan truckers exceed national safety belt use rate

Truck drivers operating in Michigan use safety belts 74.1 percent of the time, which exceeds the national average of 48 percent, according to a recent direct observation study conducted by the Wayne State University Transportation Research Group.

It is known the trucking industry lags behind the general public in safety belt use, as Michigan's safety use rate for passenger vehicles has hit an all-time high at 94 percent.

The safety belt observation study was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (USDOT/FMCSA).

In total, 2,644 commercial vehicles were observed at 181 different locations, including urban

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Kent County Sheriff Lawrence A. Stelma speaks at a news conference kicking off the statewide drunk driving crackdown at the Wyoming Police Department.

OHSP pilots special strategies to promote drunk driving enforcement effort

A pilot strategy hit the streets of Michigan last month to boost awareness of a statewide drunk driving crackdown. Mobile billboards were deployed in six counties during daytime hours where traffic is heaviest.

The billboards addressed the challenge of visibility. Drunk driving enforcement typically takes place during late-night hours, when fewer people are out. To further compound visibility issues, officers who identify drunk drivers are then off the road for a few hours while they are at the jail for arrest and booking procedures.

The Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning chose to experiment with mobile billboards during daytime hours to help ensure far more motorists were aware of the special enforcement effort, which ran August 18–September 4.

The boards, which displayed the number of local drunk driving arrests in 2005, traveled throughout Oakland, Genesee, Grand Traverse, Kent, Jackson and Marquette counties.

OHSP teams up with Metroparks to reward safety belt use

Huron-Clinton Metroparks visitors who played it safe by buckling up over the Fourth of July weekend were awarded with a refreshing drink for their holiday picnics.

Metroparks officers handed more than 1,600 cans of Pepsi, donated by Pepsi Bottling Group of Howell, to drivers and passengers who wore their safety belts before the parks' fireworks displays. Those who didn't follow the safety belt law received a flyer about why buckling up is so important.



"Buckle Up. Every Trip. Every Time" banners were posted at the entrance of the seven participating parks during the promotion.

"We found that a lot of people were wearing their safety belts, so the Pepsi went quickly at most of our locations," said Howard



A Huron-Clinton Metroparks police officer rewards park visitors for wearing their safety belts by presenting them with a complimentary Pepsi product.

Chanter, Huron-Clinton Metroparks chief of police. "At the same time, we were able to hand out informa-

tion about the benefits of wearing safety belts to those who weren't buckled up."

Michigan truckers exceed national safety belt use rate - 74.1 percent

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and rural locations in both peninsulas.

The study found that younger truck drivers, under age 29, were slightly less likely to wear a safety belt at 70.6 percent use compared to 73.4 percent for truck drivers age 30 - 59 and 74.1 percent for drivers age 60 and older.

Additionally, the rate for passengers in trucks was significantly lower at 53.4 percent.

The study also found that truck drivers with Michigan license plates were less likely to buckle up than their counterparts in other states. Michigan drivers had a 71.8 percent safety belt use rate, while

drivers from Quebec had a 93.3 percent rate, Pennsylvania drivers had an 83.3 percent rate, and Missouri drivers an 80 percent usage rate. Of the 14 states with more than 10 observations, Michigan drivers had the lowest usage rate.

The study also found that interstate truck drivers were more likely to wear safety belts than local drivers, at 74.8 percent and 66.3 percent, respectively. Surprisingly, hazardous materials drivers used safety belts less often than general freight drivers, at 68.5 percent and 73.5 percent, respectively.

The study also found the use rates in the chart on the right:

Vehicle Type	Safety Belt Use Rate
Auto Transporter	70.45%
Gravel Train	74.11%
Flatbed	70.69%
Fuel Tanker	71.03%
Dump Truck	50.67%
Construction Truck	50.00%
Cargo Van	75.62%
Garbage Truck	69.81%
Carrier Type	Use Rate
National Fleet	74.6%
Regional Fleet	73.7%
Local Fleet	69.6%
Individual Owner	75.8%

Ford hosts Driving Skills for Life teen safety program

More than 700 teen drivers and their parents attended an innovative camp August 1–3 at the Michigan Proving Ground, where they learned *Driving Skills for Life*.

Vehicle crashes are the No. 1 killer of teenagers in America.

Nearly 6,000 teens die

annually in

such crashes – 5,896 in 2004,

according to the most recent data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA.)

To combat these deaths, Ford Motor Company, the Governor's Highway Safety Association (GHSA) and a panel of safety experts established the *Driving Skills for Life* program to help teens develop the necessary skills for safe driving beyond what they learn in standard driver education programs.

The three-day camp helped young drivers improve their skills in four key areas that are critical factors in more than 60 percent of teen vehicle crashes: hazard recognition, vehicle handling, space management and speed management.

The *Driving Skills for Life* program is a complement to the graduated licensing laws that phase-in driving privileges with parental supervision so that novice drivers gain experience driving while under controlled conditions.

Also available are an interactive website at www.drivingskillsforlife.com, an in-depth CD video, and an educator kit. There is no charge for the materials, which not only can be used by young drivers, but also by educators and parents in school or community settings. Teens can test their knowledge and earn prizes by participating online.



New national drunk driving theme line unveiled

Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has announced that *Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.* is the new national campaign theme line to support high visibility enforcement (HVE) efforts to help stop impaired driving. This new campaign theme line replaces NHTSA's use of *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.*

A new logo as well as market-

ing and earned media materials supporting the theme line, along with new television and radio spots, have been developed to support the campaign.

Focus groups with men, ages 21–34, were conducted in Baltimore, Birmingham, Kansas City, Portland and Chicago to help develop the new campaign theme.

Kuska named Michigan liaison for NHTSA's Great Lakes Region

Thelma Kuska, Regional Program Manager for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Great Lakes Region office, has been assigned as the state liaison for Michigan. In this position, she serves as the contact person between the regional office and the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning. Kuska replaces Donna Smith, who served as Michigan's designee for six years and will now work with Illinois' highway safety office.

Kuska is an R.N. with experience in emergency nursing. Prior to joining NHTSA's Great Lakes Region office, she spent much of her time speaking to teens about underage

drinking as part of the Emergency Nurses Association's program "Choices for Living."

A certified child passenger safety (CPS) technician instructor, Kuska was the first NHTSA Region representative named to the National CPS Board.

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Editor: Lynn Sutfin

Michigan Department of State Police
Office of Highway Safety Planning
4000 Collins Road, P.O. Box 30633
Lansing, MI 48909-8133
(517) 336-6477

Hybrid vehicle safety information available for emergency personnel

Any crash scene presents dangers to the emergency personnel who respond. As technology advances, there are new challenges and questions to be answered for the protection of everyone at the crash scene.

Questions have come up concerning the safety of emergency workers at the scene of crashes involving "hybrid vehicles," which have high voltage components, batteries and electric motors, in addition to standard internal combustion engines.

All such vehicles sold in the United States must comply with post-crash fuel integrity standards, which place strict limits on leakage. In addition, electrically-powered vehicles must meet the post-crash standard for shock protection and battery electrolyte spillage.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has issued new regulations concerning post-crash problems, including those already mentioned and for vehicles fueled with compressed natural gas. In the past, NHTSA has helped supply and coordinate air bag information for concerned emergency workers.

In contrast to standard vehicles, which have the chassis as part of the 12-volt electrical circuit, hybrid vehicles use heavily-insulated wires for both sides of the high voltage circuit. Automatic shutoff systems also reduce the post-crash risk.

Hybrid vehicle manufacturers are the best source for detailed advice for emergency personnel. They can supply diagrams of wiring paths, locations of cut-off switches and guidance on the best ways to extricate

occupants safely from their particular vehicles. NHTSA refers questioners to the experts within the companies involved.

Information on Honda's Insight can be found at www.insightcentral.net/_files/_pdf/erg.pdf.

Information of Toyota's Prius can be located at <http://techinfo.lexus.com/public/main/2ndprius.pdf>.

GM has a helpful web site on the Silverado at www.gmstc.com/.

A series of detailed articles on hybrid vehicle crash victim extrication can be found at www.firehouse.com/extrication/hybrid/.

The National Alternative Fuels Training Consortium also has information available at www.naftc.wvu.edu.

A research note on battery disconnection is available at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/ems/disconne.htm.

2005 Drunk Driving Audit shows fatalities, injuries and arrests continue to decline

Michigan's drunk driving arrests, convictions and crashes, as well as fatalities and injuries involving alcohol and/or drugs, have decreased for the fourth consecutive year, according to the 2005 Drunk Driving Audit.

The audit, issued by the Michigan State Police, Criminal Justice Information Center, includes arrest activity by law enforcement agency for each county in the state as well as crash, injury and fatality information by county.

Alcohol- and/or drug-related fatalities fell 2.4 percent, from 418 in 2004 to 408 in 2005. Injuries resulting from alcohol- and/or drug-related crashes decreased by about 8 percent, from 8,667 in 2004 to 7,982 in 2005.

Drunk and impaired driving arrests totaled 54,056, a decrease from the 55,070 individuals arrested in 2004. Of the arrests in 2005, 52,235 were for operating while intoxicated (OWI). Convictions for 2005, which may be from prior-year arrests, include 22,631 for OWI and 29,188 for impaired driving.

Tougher drunk driving laws and highly-visible enforcement of those laws have contributed to these decreases. Michigan's repeat offender law, which took effect in October 1999, created harsher penalties for repeat offenders in an effort to limit access to vehicles through license plate confiscation, mandatory vehicle immobilization and vehicle forfeiture. In September 2003, the legal definition of drunk driving was changed to .08 blood alcohol content (BAC).

2007 Michigan Traffic Safety Summit is March 13-15

The 2007 Michigan Traffic Safety Summit is being held March 13-15 at the Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center in East Lansing.

The Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) is seeking topic ideas and workshop suggestions, along with suggested speakers, by October 1.

Please visit the OHSP website for a workshop suggestion form at www.michigan.gov/ohsp, under the Safety



Summit section.

Further information will be sent out later this fall.

For more information regarding sessions and workshops, contact Anne Readett at (517) 333-5317 or readetta@michigan.gov.

Tips on collecting evidence at vehicular homicide cases

By John Kwasnoski

Reprinted from *The Green Light News*

Perhaps the most troubling defense in a motor vehicle homicide case can be one involving operator identification. A prosecutor calls or e-mails me with a panicked tone because the superb collision reconstruction showing the alleged operator to be traveling at an excessive speed, or crossing the center line, or yawing off the road into a tree causing death to a passenger is challenged with regard to who was operating.

Proving who was operating was not a part of the investigation, because investigators at the scene had concluded that they "knew" who was operating. Knowing something and proving it are two different things. Some of the investigative activities that make the operator ID defense less effective might include:

- anticipating the operator ID defense in every case and processing the scene with regard for proof of operation
- produce a scale drawing
- do a reconstruction showing vehicle motion to final rest
- do a vehicle inspection, including interior of the vehicle
- photograph the vehicle interior
- do a forensic examination of the vehicle, if there is any indication of operator identity problems
- do an autopsy
- collect samples of blood, hair, etc. from the alleged passenger
- identify, and question, all of the witnesses who could identify the defendant as the operator that were not identified, or were not questioned with regard as to who was operating
- obtain the 911 records as part of the investigation
- get the EMS records showing who had contact with the occupants of the vehicle
- save the clothing of the victim

- and defendant
- take photographs of the alleged operator's injuries or lack of injuries
- secure and protect the vehicle, and do not release the vehicle without the prosecutor's authorization
- check for potential evidence such as video cameras at gas stations, stores, etc.
- check for any evidence of purchases that might identify the operator
- include operator ID as part of every statement taken at the time of the crash

As just one example, look at some of the forensic evidence associated with the vehicle that might be available to identify the operator, if investigators were aware of the potential need for proof:

- "pattern injury" on chest from steering wheel
- left side of head contact with A-pillar
- fingerprints on steering wheel, key, control levers, light switch or rearview mirror

- eye witnesses before or after crash
- blood spatter on driver's side of vehicle
- safety belt marks consistent with belt use
- forensics on deployed air bag
- forensics from windshield "spider web" fracture
- seat position
- damage to brake pedal consistent with leg injury
- pedal impression on bottom of shoe
- clothing fusion onto safety belt or seat
- shoe transfer onto console (left-to-right ejection)
- inability of passenger to operate manual transmission

Of course the investigator should not expect to find every item on the list or even many of them in any individual collision, but one or more could help corroborate other evidence of operation. Not finding any of them should certainly not be

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SAFE COMMUNITIES CORNER

2007 mini-grant applications now being accepted

The Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) is now accepting applications for \$5,000 mini-grants from Michigan Safe Community Coalitions. OHSP will administer these grants October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007, using the e-grants system found at https://magic.state.mi.us/emi_msp/login.asp.



Local non-profit coalitions who have been identified as participating Safe Community Coalitions by OHSP may apply for Safe Community grants to conduct traffic safety and injury prevention projects. This excludes Wayne and Macomb

counties, as these counties already have funding allocated for Safe Community efforts. Grants will not be awarded to individuals.

If interested in submitting a Safe Community mini-grant application, please contact Patricia Carrow at (517) 333-5315 or at carrowp@michigan.gov with any questions.

Graduated Driver Licensing reduces fatal crashes by 11 percent

Graduated driver licensing programs reduce, by an average of 11 percent, the incidence of fatal crashes of 16-year-old drivers, according to a study by researchers from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Center for Injury Research and Policy and the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. When examining the most comprehensive programs, the researchers found about a 20 percent reduction in fatal crashes involving 16-year-old drivers. The report was supported primarily by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and in part by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Graduated driver licensing programs differ in each state. The Hopkins researchers based their analyses on the presence of the following components, chosen for analysis because they are commonly found in existing programs:

- A minimum age of 15 1/2 for obtaining a learner permit
- A waiting period after obtaining

a learner permit of at least 3 months before applying for an intermediate license

- A minimum of 30 hours of supervised driving
- Minimum age of at least 16 years for obtaining an intermediate state license
- Minimum age of at least 17 years for full licensing
- A nighttime driving restriction
- A restriction on carrying passengers

The researchers used data from 1994–2004 collected by NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System and the U.S. Census Bureau to examine various graduated driver licensing programs and fatal crash statistics in 36 U.S. states with graduated driver licensing programs and seven without.

Comparing states with five program components to states without graduated driver licensing programs, the researchers reported an 18 percent difference in fatal crashes involving 16-year-old drivers. Programs with six or seven

components were associated with a 21 percent reduction. The researchers also found a 16–21 percent reduction in fatal crashes when programs included an age requirement in addition to a wait of at least three months before allowing teens to apply for their intermediate-stage license, plus nighttime driving restrictions and either 30 hours of supervised driving or passenger restrictions.

In addition, the authors' findings were strengthened by examining fatal crashes involving drivers aged 20–24 and 25–29. The researchers did not find a reduction in fatal crashes in these age groups. Graduated driver licensing restrictions primarily affect 16-year-olds, indicating that the changes were not associated with the overall driving environment that would also have influenced older drivers, explained co-author Li-Hui Chen, PhD.

Tips on collecting evidence at vehicular homicide cases

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interpreted as proof of any kind.

This is a situation that prosecutors and law enforcement can work on ahead of time. Realizing that every case may be vulnerable to such a defense attack, the prosecutor should meet with local law enforcement to establish policies to overcome some of the shortfalls in the standard investigation protocol; additionally, the prosecutor can ask that during training, investigators be made aware of the critical nature of obtaining proof of operation in every case. Over time the operator ID defense should become less and

less problematic, but it won't happen by itself.

John B. Kwasnoski is Professor Emeritus of Forensic Physics at Western New England College, Springfield, MA after 31 years on the faculty. He is a certified police trainer in more than 20 states and is the crash reconstructionist on the "Lethal Weapon – DWI Homicide" team formed by the National Traffic Law Center to teach prosecutors how to utilize expert witness testimony and cross examine adverse expert witnesses. He has reconstructed over 650 crashes.

WHAT'S AHEAD

October

- **2–6** Drive Safely Work Week
www.netsnational.org/index2.asp
- **4** Walk to School Day
www.walkableamerica.org
- **11** Law Enforcement Challenge Recognition Ceremony – Holiday Inn South, Lansing
- **15–21** School Bus Safety Week
- Walk to School Month
www.walkableamerica.org